

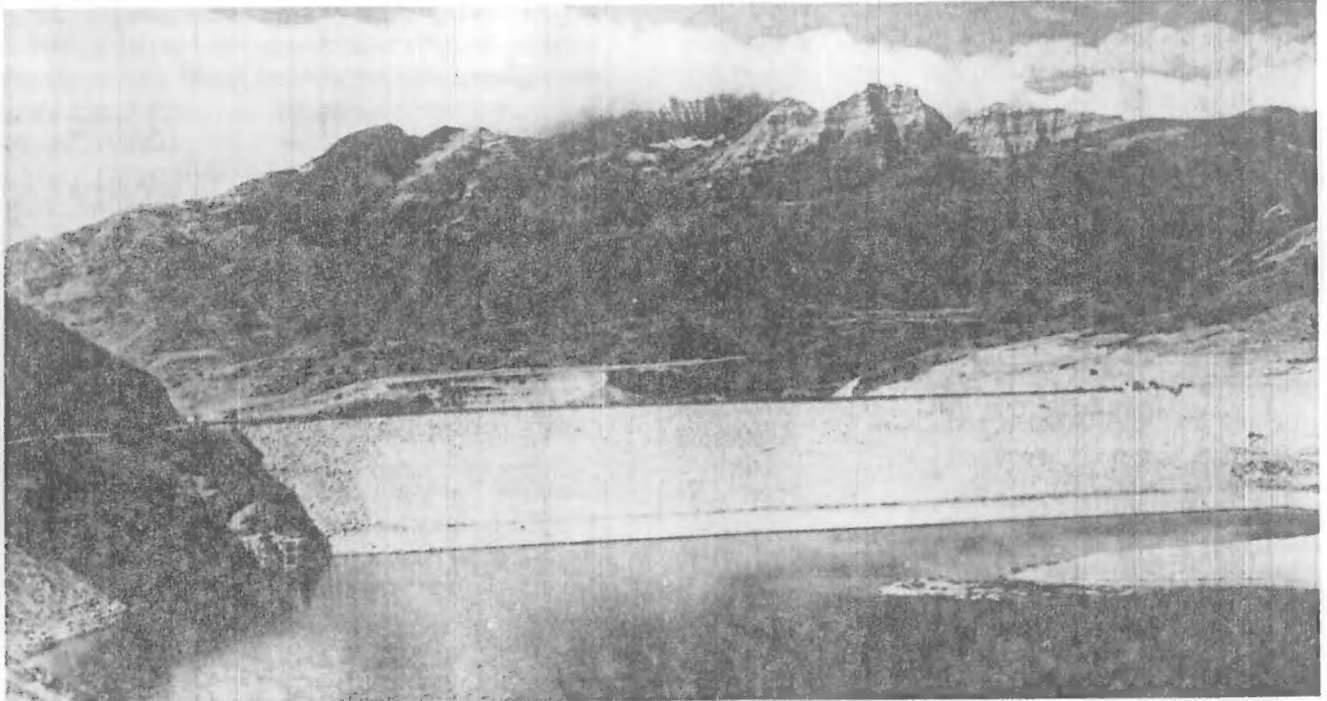
## DEER CREEK RESERVOIR

The key structure of the Provo River system now is the Deer Creek Dam located about twelve miles northeast of Provo Bench in Provo Canyon. It was completed by the Bureau of Reclamation in 1941. Weber River water and Duchesne River water, plus some of Provo River's high water, is stored in Deer Creek Reservoir. When Deer Creek Reservoir is full,

was estimated that the reservoir could be built for about \$7,000,000 repayable in forty years without interest.

The matter of persuading companies and cities to sign the government contracts for repayment of construction costs, operating procedures, and losses in case of default, might never been accomplished but for the work of Attorney Arthur V. Watkins. He and Provo City Engineer, Elmer A. Jacob, volunteered their services, without pay, and spent many months persuading individuals and groups that they had everything to gain and nothing to lose by incurring this government indebtedness.

As subscriptions for water were solicited, it



DEER CREEK RESERVOIR  
Courtesy BYU Archives

its Weber and Duchesne sources are cut off. The stored water of this reservoir is used mostly for culinary and industrial use. On the bench, 2,254 acre-feet go to the Metropolitan Water District of Orem; 2,000 acre-feet go to the Provo Bench Canal and Irrigation Company; and 1,600 acre-feet go to the Provo Reservoir Water Users Company. Deer Creek stockholders may use more than they own if they can buy from another stockholder who has more than he needs for the season.

If it were not for the Deer Creek Reservoir Project, Orem would have stopped growing in 1940. Neither Geneva Steel Plant nor any of its related industries would have been built. When Reed Smoot was senator, building such a dam was considered necessary by government and community leaders. Plans were made in the 1930s during the depression. It

became obvious that agricultural wealth was not sufficient to pay the government obligations off over a forty-year period. It was then that Arthur V. Watkins conceived the idea that cities and towns could subscribe for water through Metropolitan Water Boards. A number of towns and cities in Utah County were very hesitant to create these boards. They felt that they had sufficient water for the future; but, today they are sorry they did not participate more fully.

Provo City subscribed for 8,000 acre feet; American Fork, Pleasant Grove, and Lehi each subscribed for 500 acre feet; Orem could qualify only for 2,240 acre feet because of its low assessed valuation. Provo Reservoir Water Users Company subscribed for 16,000 acre feet which was the largest agricultural subscription. Provo Bench Canal and Irrigation Company subscribed for 800 acre feet.

## *"It Happened in Orem"*

22

When there were still more subscriptions available, Salt Lake City agreed to pay the additional amount. In later years, when every little company and city in the area was begging for more Deer Creek water, Salt Lake City was blamed for taking the surplus.

The cost of building the reservoir increased steadily because of delays and inflation. Even though the final cost was more than three times the original estimate—\$24,000,000 or \$240 an acre-foot, Deer Creek Reservoir is still the cheapest and surest water supply in the area.

The completion of the Deer Creek Reservoir fulfilled a prophecy of Brigham Young as recorded in the diary of Ben H. Bullock:

Some day an earthen dam will be constructed in Provo Canyon across the Provo River making a large reservoir, and water will be take from this reservoir around the foothills of this valley into Salt Lake Valley and the people of Salt Lake City will get much of their supply of water from this source.

